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Francisca Hernández Hernández



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Documentary Sources of Museology: Reflections and Perspectives

Francisca Hernández Hernández

Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

Epistemological approach to museology as a documentation approach of memory

Today more than ever, we need to think of museology as an intellectual exercise that helps us establish a dialogue with other systems of thought, so that we can perceive reality in all its complexity. If we regard museology as a social science, we cannot deny that it possesses a strongly interdisciplinary character that impels it to collaborate with other branches of knowledge in order to focus interest on the common object of study, the museum and the activity it involves.

In consequence, we can say that museology, as a social science, is closely linked to the disciplines involved with documentation of memory in its contribution to a better understanding of society. Moreover, we concur with Davallon (1997, p. 29) in the belief that museology is less and less a “science of the museum” and is increasingly becoming a “science of the treatment of museum objects,” insofar as these are regarded as a heritage and a support for information. The information and communication sciences would, in that case, be called upon to contribute their own fields of knowledge (HernándezHernández, 2006, p. 73).

But which are the information sciences? These include all those disciplines whose principal aim is the diffusion of information. Among them, we can cite library science, archival science, documentation, and museology. All belong to different areas of knowledge and provide us with extremely important informative and symbolic capital (QuinteroCastro et al., 2009, p. 205) on the events that have taken place throughout history. Also they furnish a *raison d’être* for the functions of conservation, processing, analysis, classification, organisation, and diffusion of documents carried out by libraries, archives, museums, and documentation centres.

We can define sources of documentary information as “those institutions which provide, amass, manage, transmit or serve information” (Osuna Alarcón, 2011, p. 246). When we speak of these sources, we are therefore referring to the documents that are the supports of information, given that the latter is what offers us the possibility of acquiring new documents. In this context, museum objects are considered authentic documents that contribute to promote research.

Standard UNE-ISO 5127 (2010) defines a document as any “recorded information that can be considered as a unit in a process of documentation,” while documentation is the “collection and treatment of recorded information in a continuous and systematic fashion that permits its storage, recovery, use and transmission.” The museum, meanwhile, is defined as a “collection of documents of cultural or scientific interest, stored permanently and arranged for

exhibition,” though it is also described as an “organisation whose function consists of the gathering, conservation and exhibition of museum documents.”

When library science, archival science, and museology provide us with systematic knowledge, they do so because they start from an analysis of the relationship established by human beings with the reality around them, and which these disciplines collect and update. It is regardless of the institutions they represent or the object-documents and treatment techniques they employ. All the information provided to us by the object-documents collected and processed within these disciplines leads us toward a fuller knowledge of the contexts and milieus within which they arose, and of the possible significances they are intended to transmit. From this point of view, they are no longer considered institutions whose basic purpose is custodianship, as initially assumed, instead the emphasis is on their capacity to produce new knowledge (ÁvilaAraújo, 2013, p. 258).

Each of these disciplines gathers information on documents and objects, becoming an object of knowledge in itself; that search for knowledge, and its consequent production, is where the three areas meet, as they are called upon to collaborate closely. In this way, they offer greater and greater knowledge of objects and documents, giving rise to a new concept of information. A continual dialogue among the areas, while each retains its specificity without being forced to merge unnecessarily, can help enrich their investigations, the conclusions reached on their theoretical basis, and the functions they perform.

Since these disciplines are the repositories for the cultural heritage of humanity, they become places of memory in all its various senses. Libraries offer us bibliographical memory, archives are historical memory, and documentation centres and museums offer cultural memory. All share origins in documentary information and also have the same goal: to act as transmitters of the collective memory of peoples. At the same time, each possesses its own specificity, autonomy and disciplinary identity as a subject to be distinguished from documentary information, which is their object of study and research.

We begin on the basis that these areas must be considered part of the social and human sciences, in that social and human phenomena provide their object of study. Employing a methodology of their own that takes into account the specific hermeneutics, phenomenology, didactics, and linguistics of critical theory, they lay bare the way in which we come to know social and human reality. Today's social sciences cannot turn their back on the transformations experienced by systematic thought, and they need to resort to “multiple epistemologies” (Herrera, 2009, p. 47) closely involved with the multicultural dimension of our society and with different ways of conceiving and explaining reality.

The documentary information sciences can make use of these epistemologies, intrinsic to the social sciences, applying them to their object of study, methodology and investigation. All are directed towards work with documents, information, and records that have to be preserved, organised and classified with the purpose of contributing and communicating new knowledge to society. However, let us see how these subjects have evolved theoretically. Since antiquity, libraries, archives, and museums have been viewed as

institutions whose mission was to preserve and transmit the experiences and knowledge related to the culture of different peoples, which might be manifested either in literary texts or in collections of objects and artwork.

From the start, these institutions formed part of the same trunk of knowledge, since they all involve organising and storing documents of every kind, and so had many things in common even if each had its own specificity and procedural techniques (Ortega, 2004, p. 3). Moreover, the origins of the library and museum are closely linked, for there was no museum in ancient times without a library, and no library without art objects, pictures, medals, or coin collections evidencing its encyclopaedic character (López de Prado, 2003, p. 11). If museums are centres for research as well as conservation and exhibition, libraries too are not only essential means of conservation but also instruments for change through the spread of knowledge, where the user becomes someone who deliberately accepts involvement.

When we analyse the origins and theoretical evolution, we find many similarities across these institutions. Although it was unclear for some time exactly what the sense of each was, even to the point of some confusion over their respective aims, in fact each has specific functions, while they all use objects, books and documents to preserve and conserve the history of humanity. Such institutions arose with the idea of guarding objects, writings, and documents, and there is clearly a close link between safeguarding objects and documents and preserving memory. José Luis Borges (1998) said the book “is an extension of the memory and the imagination.” We can also say that documentary heritage, of which these places are the repositories, forms part of the collective memory of peoples and is the expression of their cultural and linguistic diversity. In this respect, they are considered institutions of social memory, with an interdisciplinary character; as systems of memory, they form part of the information-processing system of society (García Marco, 2010, p. 61). All these repositories are expected to take care of cultural properties and place them at the service of the society. They cannot then be regarded as mere depots or storehouses, but must be viewed as spaces open to creativity and to the study of their contents, and therefore made accessible to all those who wish to visit or consult them.

These institutions arise when human beings try to express their thoughts, ideas, knowledge, and feelings through different written or pictorial techniques, or by creating certain objects and records of knowledge. When these objects acquire material existence, it creates the need to preserve and collect them with a variety of aims, whether religious, literary, artistic, philosophical, or political (ÁvilaAraújo, 2013, p. 238). The creation of different objects on various supports leads them to be subject to various processes of intervention, according to the institutions that take charge of them, in a given period of a *syncretic* nature, when it will be very hard to tell whether the institution is an archive, a library, or a museum, according to Da Silva (2006).

The Renaissance brought a great interest in works created by human sensibility, regarded as genuine works of art that therefore had to be kept and preserved. For this reason, what we know now as library sciences, archival sciences, and museology built up their knowledge on the basis of a patrimonial vision. The development of the

Humanities during the Enlightenment paved the way for studies in philosophy, literature, and history, while archives, libraries, and museums became the spaces containing the materials of interest to those branches of knowledge. In this manner, they attracted bibliophiles, literati, historians, and art critics, who then carried out the functions of archivists, librarians, and museologists. Thus these disciplines became the generators of knowledge in fields other than their own (ÁvilaAraújo, 2013, p. 239). However, the French Revolution, the arrival of the modern era, and the rise of positivism in the 19th century heralded the creation of modern institutions that laid more emphasis on social values, creating national archives, libraries, and museums focused on safeguarding cultural items and preserving historic memory.

As the positivist and scientific movements developed in the 18th and 19th centuries, the auxiliary subjects of archiving, documentation, and museology became increasingly independent and regarded as autonomous disciplines, although closely related to heritage and memory. All have the mission of safeguarding, preserving, and organising cultural elements, whether loose documents, books, or artifacts, which are studied and analysed on the premises of systematic theory. At first, however, not all researchers accepted the methodical and objective character of these disciplines, voicing serious objections motivated by the absence of an epistemological basis. Meanwhile, defenders argued that these subjects could not be compared with pure and natural sciences because heritage varies in technique, materiality, and the spaces where it is preserved.

On the other hand, we may wonder if museology shares the same object as information sciences, and whether it is consequently possible to consider the museum object as a document in terms of documentary information. Library science, archival science, and documentation are all aimed at the transmission of bibliographical, historical, political, cultural, and artistic memory. This is made manifest in the documentary information contained by each approach, and their studies, research, and procedures are dedicated to this task. The same can equally be said of museology, since the museum object also possesses historical, aesthetic, and cognitive characteristics that make it an informative document, closely related to that of the documentary information sciences.

Some authors like Quintero Castro (2013, p. IX) distinguish between the disciplines that study documentary information, separating them into general subjects (library sciences, documentation, and information science) and specific disciplines (archival science, bibliography, and museology); they also assert that the similarities and differences existing between these categories are not clear. If we analyse the conceptual aspects of the documentary information subjects, the first question that arises is whether or not it is possible to agree on a definition of the object of study of library science. If so, this will mean defining the discipline's object of study according to different schools and signalling the points on which they coincide, since the terminology and conceptual diversity is very great. Even so, all these approaches take the world of documentary information as their field of phenomena. While the origin and development of each area is different, they can be said to have reached a point of union and convergence today. What differentiates them is the set of cultural assets they possess and the institutions that hold them, since the function they attribute to documents is always based on the informational content they possess. Homulos (1990) calls the set of

archives, libraries, and museums “culture collecting institutions”, each one deciding what is to be preserved, managing memory, producing documentary information, and acting as mediators for information by means of books, objects, or series of documents. Therefore the interdisciplinary character of such disciplines now must be analysed on the premises of analogical hermeneutics in order to discern their common elements and discover their differences. For what is it that really distinguishes the information sciences from museology?

According to Smit (1999, p. 4), these disciplines, rather like three estranged sisters, have long ignored one another's theory, methodology, and practice, leading to an emphasis on their differences and specificities rather than their similarities. These differences can be seen through analysis of their nature, their genesis, and the methodology followed in their technical treatment of documents, as well as in the characteristics of the institutions themselves. Archives, libraries, and museums are expected to offer society the world's memory with the aid of the specific materials they possess, which must be properly managed. Their mission can be only to organise and facilitate public access to information resources. Because their attention is focused differently, however, they employ different methods of selecting, processing, and broadcasting information; their tools and techniques, of course, are different as well. We might say that while archives and libraries have taken words into their custody, museums have inclined more toward the protection of objects (Morero González, 2006, p. 98) and, above all, of what lies behind them.

The information sciences focus more on the gnoseological dimension of knowledge production, which is closely related to mathematics, logic, and new technologies. Their task is to study the properties of communication processes that can operate in archives and libraries. Furthermore, they must attempt to explain the conceptual and methodological foundations of the systems used to manage gathered information.

According to Da Silva (2002, p. 577ff), library science and archival science, like documentation and museology, were originally constituted as modern methods on the basis of a patrimonialist paradigm, characterised by its “historicist, empirico-technicist, documentalist, empirico-patrimonialist” vision. This was a patrimonialist empiricism founded on the work of historiographers and the emotional, aesthetic, and economic value attached to ancient or rare artifacts and documents. Arising in the mid-19th century, it developed within public institutions such as national libraries, archives, and museums, following the model of L'École Nationale des Chartes, created in 1821, and L'École du Louvre, of 1882. The paradigm is made manifest in the following ways:

- * The overvaluation of custodianship, conservation, and restoration of the support as the fundamental professional activity of librarians, archivists, and museologists.

- * The foregrounding of memory as the legitimising source of the modern Nation-State and the intellectual construction of the past on which it is founded.

* The importance of access to the content of documents and objects through the development of research instruments like guides, inventories, and catalogues.

* The formal and professional distinction of the archivist, librarian, and museologist, along with acceptance that they are cultural agents working with heritage who conserve, preserve, gather, order, classify, and disseminate documentation in a broad sense that also includes the objects of museum collections.

Lacking a theoretical and methodological basis that would lay the groundwork for research, the practical training received at both academic and institutional organisations tended to overvalue custodianship, conservation, and support (da Silva, 2013, p. 27 ff). Nevertheless, according to the same author, we have now entered a second phase characterised by its post-custodianship, informational, and methodical dimension, which is associated with an evolutionary perspective that leans towards a “trans-disciplinary” information science. That results from the fusion of the practical disciplines of archival science, library science, documentation, and, a little later, museology. With the appearance of new technologies, information starts to be valued much more as a dynamic element in contrast with the tradition of documentary immobility. From that moment, the object of these disciplines becomes information considered as a phenomenon to be taken into account and a process to be developed. Their consideration as documentary sciences means they are called on to manage memory, produce more documentary information, and become mediators of information, communicating it to users. Such mediation takes place between the object-documents and individuals converted into potential users with the objective of facilitating communication between what the object represents and the subject who interprets it, so that the user can construct new knowledge once the information is gathered (DottaOrtega, 2013, p. 153).

The museum as documentation centre

Documentation can be regarded as one of the museum’s most important functions, to the point where the museum is viewed as a true documentation centre where information on cultural heritage is gathered, managed, and disseminated. The museum is the social space for the collection, conservation, recording, documenting, investigation, and diffusion of the collective memory of material and immaterial heritage, which has been gathered and transmitted by a community throughout its history, as a source of information and communication for current and future generations. At the same time, however, it is the place where society participates in the recreation of that memory. Consequently, we understand museum documentation as a set of very diverse documents in terms of supports, contents, origins, and cultural value. It is also a process consisting of various sequences of work involved in producing the different sets of documents or managing the museum.

When an object enters the museum, it is deprived of the context in which it originally emerged, ceasing to be an ordinary object and so losing its protective condition, transforming itself into a document by becoming a product of human action. The museum object is then attributed with cultural, aesthetic, symbolic, and historic values that are destined to form part of museum collections in a manner susceptible to documentary treatment. When speaking of museology as a documentary source of memory, it is necessary to indicate

which hermeneutic methodology is to be followed in the process of analysing the relationship between objects or documents and the memory to which they give rise, for the results will differ greatly depending on the course we choose to follow. It has to be seen whether we should depart from the object-document to reach recognition of what it has signified for a particular community, or whether on the other hand we should halt at the object-document and limit our purpose solely to exhibiting it, making no reference to its significance. We shall obviously choose the first option, since it is on the basis of the object that we will be able to discover its own memory, avoiding the danger pointed out by De Meneses (1992, p. 106) of classifying objects into “*a priori* categories, univocal vacuums of documentary meaning that lead to the fragmentation of knowledge” by dividing it into historical, artistic, or symbolic objects, and giving to understand that the signifieds were generated by the objects themselves, not by society.

Museological documentation is the result of a constant process of museological development that implies not only the compilation of every existing class of information but also the attempt to communicate knowledge. It aims to recover all the information about the object and, to this end uses the techniques and procedures of library science such as acquisition, registration, identification, numeration, indexing, and the gathering or recording of all the data that can contribute information about the object. However, it cannot content itself with being a mere database that can be consulted at any time but offers mere data without any content. Rather, it must be the place where it is possible to communicate a message about the reality contained by the objects and their contexts. The main function of museological documentation is to communicate how the relationship between human beings and their surrounding reality has occurred; in this way, we can clearly understand their systems of values, symbols, and signifieds as manifested in object-documents created all through the history of peoples. When objects enter the museum, they therefore become documents and, as Ivo Maroevic points out (1989, p. 34; 1994, p. 118), so the theoretical maturity of the museological discipline rests upon the recognition of the informative value of the object, and consequently of its status as document. Manifestly then, the author (1998, p. 163) readily relates museology to the information sciences, and does so while presenting museological objects or musealia from a heritage perspective.

For their part, museum archives are concerned with conservation of the documentation the museum generates, such as correspondence, memoirs, reports, proceedings, personnel records, and accounts. We can therefore say that they are repositories of its historic memory, where we find its origin and development, its collections and activities, and everything related to its functioning, as an essential source for writing its history. To this we must add the museum library, considered as one more instrument for communication by means of the most appropriate techniques of the information and knowledge contained by the object-documents. All that the library acquires, organises, stores, and disseminates is found in books and documents, regardless of whether their support is paper, electronic, or magnetic. All its activity therefore has to be aimed at satisfying the users' information needs, by offering them the information contained in the documents related to the museum's objects. The current trend of today's museums is to create their own centres for the simultaneous management of the archive, library, and

documentation, examples being the Prado and the Reina Sofía Art Centre in Madrid.

The concept of document and cultural heritage applied to the areas of museology, library science and archival science

We may wonder whether or not it is possible to apply the concepts of document and cultural heritage to the areas of museology, library science, and archival science. Some authors insist on leaving museology, museums, and displayed cultural properties outside the field of documentation. For instance, although Emilia Currás (1982, p. 26-27) accepts the application of the concept of document to museological objects, she keeps museology separate from the field of information sciences. Paul Otlet (1934, p. 216-217) initially adopted a functional view of the document to ask whether sculpture, museum objects, and live animals ought to be considered as documents; he eventually included the museum object inside the broader field of documentation, together with other inventions like the telegraph, radio, television and gramophone record, which he regarded as substitutes for the book. When it comes to studying and comprehending the physical and functional relation of the document, Otlet does not hesitate to resort to the methodical research of other disciplines like library science, archival science, museology, linguistics, sociology, logic, psychology, technology, and pedagogy.

The fact that many authors theoretically accept the broad concept of the document does not mean that they approve of its application to three-dimensional objects. In methodological terms, they restrict documentary research and analysis to the written and, at most, two-dimensional testimony. In any case, a distinction must be made between the specific document of each particular area and the sources of information they employ. According to Standard UNE-ISO 5127 (2010), museum documents are characterised by the "cultural and scientific interest they must possess in order to be permanently stored in readiness for exhibition."

The object-document is important in that it is the physical support that contains a series of pieces of information necessary for its understanding. It would not perform its true mission if it did not become a source of documentation and information, providing new knowledge that can be transmitted and updated in space and time. Such is the informative concept of the object-document, which can also be accompanied by a static and dynamic concept, according to López Yepes (1997, p. 16). Two attitudes can be adopted in the contemplation of one specific artwork, such as Velázquez' *The Surrender of Breda* at the Museo del Prado. If we view it from an aesthetic perspective, we will enjoy its formal beauty, but if our perception acquires a documentary dimension, the picture also furnishes us with several pieces of information on the armour and uniforms worn by soldiers at that period; the museum will in this sense become a documentation centre.

An object-document in a museum is valuable in that it provides us with a set of information, concepts, and ideas that must be studied for a better understanding of the message they are intended to transmit. The more we know about the relationship between the object and the human being who created it, the more committed we shall be to its conservation and transmission. The object goes from

being an isolated and decontextualised unit of data to becoming a full museological entity that demands active implication on the part of man to acquire a life of its own and transmit significance to the society that contemplates it.

Every object, material or immaterial, natural or cultural, makes reference to a concrete reality that has occurred in history, and which offers us various series of information. Through them, we can learn how people thought in the past and confront their ideas with those of the present day. It is here that the museological context offered by the object can indicate what value systems, symbols, and signifieds were used in the relations established between societies and individuals, both among themselves and with nature. They even went so far as to transform, resulting in the creation of new objects that enrich the knowledge already acquired. As an object of knowledge, the museum object becomes a support for information through the possession of aesthetic value or historical testimony. It is thereby transformed into a representative symbol of a particular cultural manifestation, from which a good deal of information is to be drawn (CarriónGutiérrez, 1987).

We must bear in mind that museological documentation is not intended to be anything but retrieval, as far as possible, of all the information held by the object-document, which will then be used to confirm its aesthetic, artistic and historic value when it enters the museum. At that point, the item becomes a fragmented object that offers us a partial view, not a global one, of the cultural production of society at a particular moment of history. This means that documentary action must go beyond the mere retrieval of information from the object itself to investigate the context of the cultural item's production, a method conducive to the construction of knowledge about the historically produced cultural artifact, as asserted by Rosana Andrade do Nascimento (1994, p. 36). Once more, we repeat that the object-documents of the museum are supports for information that require conservation, since they contain all the information data necessary to gain an idea of what they signify and contribute to the history of humanity.

Our remarks on the museological object draw attention to the close relations between museology and the information sciences. They can moreover be applied to the documents gathered through the library and archival sciences with a view to organising, storing, preserving, and exhibiting them for educational and cultural purposes. The function of the documentation sciences, like that of museology, is to provide the information that can be gleaned from the data possessed. The more information they retrieve, the greater their contribution of knowledge to society. For this reason, all these disciplines are dedicated to the retrieval of information in order to prevent its loss and allow it to be used as a documentary source.

Nevertheless, what distinguishes museology from the other information science areas is that when it proceeds to gather certain objects, it does so on the basis of the idea that it is necessary to document the real and create a museum space for it. Anna Gregorová (1980, p. 20) affirms that museology *"is a science studying the specific relation of man to reality, consisting in purposeful and systematic collecting and conservation of selected inanimate, material, mobile, and mainly three-dimensional objects documenting the development of nature and society and making a thorough scientific and cultural-educational use of them."*

For Stránský (1995, p. 38-40), "The object that is musealised cannot be considered a document in the sense employed by information science," where the document is understood as a data resource that has been created intentionally and fixed on a support. Although this author argues that incorporating objects into the museum can possess certain characteristics of documentation, he sees an essential difference between the ontological focus of museology and the gnoseological focus of information science. He also admits that while information and documentation science can help museology, they are not in a position to solve its specific problems. The appropriation of reality does not consist merely of collecting or preserving but also of a 'culture-generating process'.

In the same way, Peter van Mensch (1992) follows Stránský in distancing himself from models originating in the information sciences and trying to analyse objects on the principle of the museum itself. The object as data carrier can only be understood through the analysis of all the moments that form its history. An object's information value is the result of an historical process in which different phases may be distinguished: invention (cultural identity), realisation (factual identity), and use (actual identity). The researcher, historian, or ethnologist will concentrate on the analysis of factual identity, and this is another of the aspects differentiating museology from the information sciences.

However, the relationship between Documentary Information Science and Museology can be said to have undergone a certain harmonisation, an assessment repeated in recent years by Johanna W. Smit (1999), Francisca Hernández Hernández (2002), Carlos Alberto Ávila Araújo (2011) and Armando Malhiero da Silva (2013). Both disciplines attach great importance to documentary processes, take the informative aspects of objects into account, and employ instruments that will allow them to be described with the aid of the new information technologies.

Conclusions

From an institutional and professional point of view, we observe that archival science, library science, documentation, and museology possess differences that individualise them, such as their documentary supports, the organisational methodologies they adopt, and their transmission of information. However, they also have the same object of study, one proper to the information and documentation sciences, which unites them and leads them to place the information they possess at the disposal of society.

With the passage of time, these disciplines have undergone an historic, systematic, and social transformation that has closely interrelated them and made possible an open dialogue between them. They have thus gone from an emphasis on the object-document to a preferential focus on the information to be provided to users, even if, as Smit observes (1999, p. 3), there is still a certain dialectical tension between those who support the importance of the document (archivists and museologists) and those who accord priority to the information (documentalists and librarians) to be safeguarded and shared.

When considered in its own right, every museum object-document represents and contains documentary information that makes the

task of museology possible within its field of study, and which is made accessible to users. That is why museological documentation is so important for the life of a museum. In the same way, the information sciences can bring a focus to other viewpoints and perspectives contained in documents, whose information could lead to new knowledge. The interrelationship between the disciplines counters any attempt to create unnecessary distancing through common grounding in the different information contents and in the way they are transmitted to society. These disciplines are ultimately in charge of managing the memory that has been stored and recorded over time, institutionalising information so as to satisfy society's requirements. Here we have confirmation that all the elements defining the museum object-document are related to the internal dynamics of the documentary information sciences, with which they share the same object of study. On the other hand, further progress needs to be made on the consideration of museology as a discipline that goes beyond the mere communication of objects in trying to offer a vision of reality from the museum's own experience. Only in this way can the museum experience acquire a true gnoseological and, above all, ontological significance that will distinguish it from other approaches.

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Abstract

Taking an epistemological theoretical approach as our starting point, we can think of museology as an intellectual exercise that helps us establish an open dialogue with other systems of thought, such as the social sciences or information and communication sciences, so that we can perceive reality in all its complexity. At this point, however, the question arises of whether or not museology shares the same objective as these disciplines. From our point of view, we believe museology to be a social science that encompasses the

museum object as a document that transmits information and knowledge about reality, and constitutes itself as a support for constructing collective memory. For this reason, museology cannot ignore those other subjects that deal with the documentation of memory. This leads us to ponder the role played by archival and library science within the field of museology. The answer can only be that these areas must be regarded as true documentary sources for museology. Why? Because they consider the museum objects as documents bearing information and knowledge. They also help to conceive the museum as a space and instrument for communication. This constitutes the theoretical basis for the work of the museum.

Key words: Museology, Documentary Sources, Documentation Science, Information Science.

Resumen

Partiendo de un planteamiento teórico epistemológico, podemos pensar la museología como un ejercicio intelectual que nos ayude a entablar un diálogo abierto con otros sistemas de pensamiento como las ciencias sociales o las ciencias de la información y la comunicación, de manera que podamos percibir la realidad en toda su complejidad. Pero es aquí donde se nos plantea la cuestión de si la museología comparte o no el mismo objeto que estas ciencias. Desde nuestro punto de vista, pensamos que la museología es una ciencia social que comprende el objeto museal como un documento que transmite información y conocimiento sobre la realidad y se constituye en soporte para construir la memoria colectiva. Por esa razón, la museología no puede desentenderse de aquellas otras ciencias que tratan sobre la documentación de la memoria. Esto nos lleva a preguntarnos sobre el papel que la archivística y la biblioteconomía desempeñan dentro del campo de la museología. Y la respuesta no puede ser otra que éstas deben considerarse como auténticas fuentes documentales de la museología. ¿Por qué? Porque consideran los objetos del museo como documentos que son portadores de información y de conocimiento. Y, además, contribuyen a concebir el museo como un espacio e instrumento de comunicación. Todo ello constituye la base teórica que fundamenta el trabajo del museo.

Palabras clave: Museología, Fuentes Documentales, Ciencias de la Documentación, Ciencias de la Información.